

28 October 1969

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

Morning Meeting of 28 October 1969

\*DD/I called attention to the article by William Beecher in today's New York Times, "Soviet Arms Gain Detected by U. S.," and added that, working together with the DD/S&T, they are preparing a critique of this piece. The Director asked that the article be annotated.

X1 [ ] mentioned the existing ChiCom alert and commented that as yet there is no discernible pattern.

X1 [ ] briefed on the Lebanon crisis and pointed to the possibility of some settlement along the lines of the "coordination principle."

Carver reported on his meeting yesterday with Deputy Secretary Packard and identified his relaxed interest in ChiCom road building in Laos and the progress being made in the PHOENIX program.

\*\*Carver commented that he also met yesterday with Dennis Doolin, DOD/ISA, and Brigadier General George Blanchard, ACSFOR, in connection with NVN/VC troop strength. Carver went on to note that his scheduled meeting yesterday with Larry Lynn had been canceled.

Carver briefly noted indications that NVA units may be preparing to deploy into northern Laos.

X1 [ ] noted receipt of a letter from ACDA with an accompanying request for coordination and eventual delivery to the Joint Committee on Atomic Energy. He commented that this letter is an ACDA effort to be responsive to questions raised by the Joint Committee in connection with William Beecher's New York Times articles on SALT and Soviet submarines. The Director asked that no action be taken on this matter until he has had an opportunity to focus in on this exercise.

[ ]

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TOP SECRET

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DD/P noted that the WSAG meeting has been postponed until tomorrow and that today's 303 Committee meeting has been scratched.

DDCI advised that he will be visiting [ ] tomorrow, returning at approximately 1800 on 31 October. The Director asked that the Executive Committee Meeting for 31 October be canceled.

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The Director asked that Maury, [ ] accompany him to the Mahon Subcommittee hearing tomorrow.

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\*The Director asked the DD/I to get in touch with Chip Bohlen, who has asked for a briefing on Western Europe.

The Director noted that he has read the Henry Kamm articles on Laos in the New York Times and found them remarkably accurate in some respects. In response to the Director's question a brief discussion followed on how best to describe the size of an NVN Division. (The Director will appear before the Symington Subcommittee today in connection with its interest in Laos.)

The Director commented that he had a good visit to [ ] said that he found the young trainees there to be of high quality, and noted that he had an opportunity to clarify the Green Beret matter. Noting that he visited with the Midcareerists [ ] last evening, the Executive Director added that the Director's visit was much appreciated.

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Goodwin reported that he was in touch with the Los Angeles Times and determined that they are doing a major piece on the Green Beret matter and that Tom Lambert will be its author.

[ ]

L. K. White

25X

\*Extracted and sent to action officer

\*\*Following the meeting Carver noted that General Blanchard is working in ISA.

TOP SECRET

25X

# Clandestine Laotian Army Turned Tide in Vital Region

In Washington, a Senate Foreign Relations subcommittee is meeting in closed session to investigate the obscure war that has been raging for years in the kingdom of Laos. The following article is the third in a series by correspondents of The New York Times giving the background of what has been called the "twilight war" in the remote interior of Laos.

By HENRY KAMM

Special to The New York Times

VIENTIANE, Laos, Oct. 20—A few weeks ago it became known that the American-backed forces in Laos had gained an important victory on the vital plateau known as the Plaine des Jarres.

The story of that battle, as reconstructed in three weeks of discussions with the best-informed Laotian and American officials and others, illustrates the role played by Maj. Gen. Vang Pao, whose clandestine army is sponsored by the United States Central Intelligence Agency. It also demonstrates the way in which strands of the Laotian war wind through the situation in Vietnam and the Paris peace talks.

In midsummer the situation was worse than it had been for many years and the official mood in Vientiane and Washington verged on despair.

A major diversionary attack on the ground and a sharp increase in United States bombing had failed to deter the North Vietnamese invaders, feebly abetted by their local allies, the Pathet Lao, from seizing the important Government stronghold of Muong Soui, at the western edge of the Plaine des Jarres. And the enemy did not halt there.

"The ants kept coming," an American diplomat said.

Timing Was Unusual

What was so disturbing was that the capture of Muong Soui was an extraordinary achievement for the North Vietnamese by itself. They took it at a time when in previous years they had already retired closer to their bases to await the end of the rainy season. They took it while an unusually wet season posed unusually difficult supply problems. And finally, they took it despite the increase in American air raids.

When Muong Soui fell at the end of June, the Americans who guide the war in Laos and the Laotians who fight its ground actions hoped that it was the limit of the abilities of the Communist forces, which have been trying to take over since World War II.

When the North Vietnamese sent out combat teams that seized strategic points beyond Muong Soui to the south and west and cut the road that

links Vientiane with the royal capital and military air base at Luang Prabang, 50 miles to the northwest, a new and more menacing situation resulted.

The enemy forces seemed poised to strike in whatever direction they chose. They could menace not only Luang Prabang but Vientiane, about 100 miles to the south, and—perhaps most frightening—their patrols were reported in action as close as eight miles from Long Cheng, the top-secret operational base of the most important fighting force on the Government side—the clandestine guerrilla army under General Vang Pao. Long Cheng is the nerve center and principal air and supply base of the clandestine army and the real headquarters of northern Laos.

Defeatist Forecasts

In those days officials at the State Department, the Pentagon and the C.I.A. made gloomy and defeatist forecasts to visitors inquiring about Laos. In Long Cheng, General Vang Pao was equally concerned for additional reasons. After heavy losses of men and territory in a Communist offensive in the northeast early last year, the Meo tribesmen whose chief he is and who form his military strength, estimated at 40,000, were cast into gloom and doubt—gloom over their defeat and doubt over whether they might not be better off on the Communist side or under another leader.

Their declining morale posed a threat to their fighting efficiency—and they are considered just about the only sizable and efficient army in Laos—and imperiled General Vang Pao's supremacy over the 250,000 tribesmen of the northern mountains.

With his American counselors General Vang Pao sought a way out. Sources close to him contend now that it was he alone who found the winning formula and applied it, against the will of the Americans and the Government. The formula was a spectacular attack on the Plaine des Jarres, the central plateau that commands the main roads in the northern part of the country. It had been in Communist control for the most

part since 1964 as a result of the fighting that followed the breakdown of the 1962 Geneva agreement on Laos.

Other observers are prepared to believe that the attack was mounted over the hesitations of the Government of Prince Souvanna Phouma, the Premier, but certainly not over American opposition. The observers point out that when the assault began, in the last week of August, it had been prepared by heavy American bombing and that General Vang Pao's troops were carried into battle by American helicopters and supplied by American planes and copters.

A Smashing Success

In fact, diplomats here say that one of the few things General Vang Pao and Prince Souvanna Phouma have in common is heavy dependence on United States advice, consent and assistance.

The operation was a smashing success. The plain was captured and sizable quantities of enemy supplies were destroyed. The North Vietnamese, having suffered few casualties, withdrew into the hills on the northern rim of the plain, where they are regrouping and being reinforced.

The success was so great that the United States was encouraged to sponsor a major operation in the south. It had not encouraged offensive action in that region for fear that it might provoke a strong enemy riposte because of the threat to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. That might drive friendly forces so far westward as to make it even more difficult than now to infiltrate small reconnaissance teams to observe traffic on the trail, which is the route for North Vietnamese men and matériel going to the Vietcong.

It is believed here that the caution was put aside last month not only because of the victory in the plain but also to test North Vietnam on a vital issue: Was the withdrawal from the plain a gesture in response to President Nixon's decision to pull substantial numbers of American troops out of South Vietnam? Was Hanoi using Laos as the terrain for a peace signal?

An Inconclusive Answer

The answer was inconclusive and contributes to the present puzzlement.

Three battalions of Laotian Special Forces, presumed to be commanded from the C.I.A. station in Udon, Thailand, advanced eastward along Route 9 with comparative ease, although a battalion of Laotian regulars

was badly mauled. The enemy base of Muong Phine was captured and held for longer than had been believed possible.

But troops moving northward from Muong Phine toward the important center of Tchepone, on the Ho Chi Minh Trail, met determined resistance and had to pull back.

Thus, although the possible relevance of events in Laos to peace in Vietnam remains a subject of intense diplomatic speculation the military results of both operations represented the greatest Government victory in years. The effect was tonic following the defeatism that had prevailed.

"We were looking for aspirin and found a wonder drug," an American diplomat said.

The wonder drug has halted the military deterioration and, in the view of military experts, has cost the North Vietnamese time for their annual dry-season offensive—if they want to launch one. Instead of getting under way now, the experts say, Hanoi would not be able to get it to roll at full force before early next year. It would leave less time for territorial gains before the rains start again in April or May and make trails impassable by June.

There is no doubt here that North Vietnam, if it were prepared to expend the necessary strength, could confront the United States with the agonizing choice of seeing Laos fall or engaging ground troops in battle.

Perennial Instability

No wonder drug has yet been devised to cure the perennial instability of Laos, her total dependence on outside economic and military aid, the inefficiency and corruption in her Government and the endemic sense of fatalism and involvement on the part of most of her people. There is no open resentment of the American presence, which is as discreet as it is pervasive. But Laotian intellectuals, who are not anti-American, say that the United States might do more for Laos by doing less.

They recognize the corruption that has caused the United States to take into its own hands more and more of the application of the \$50-million a year in nonmilitary aid. But members of a younger generation of Laotians—educated, and untainted by corruption—are wondering how, between the powerful old-line politicians and the military on the one hand

and the heavy American bureaucracy on the other, they will ever get a chance to participate significantly in shaping their country's future.

Thoughtful Laotians say that if peace and stability without a Communist take-over can ever be achieved—a proposition considered either with unconcern or with skepticism—America will have to find a way to involve the Laotians in working for Laos.



The New York Times

Oct. 28, 1969

At one point this summer the North Vietnamese had captured Muong Soui and threatened the U.S.-backed clandestine army's headquarters at Long Cheng. Later the army held Muong Phine, near the Ho Chi Minh Trail, for a time.



United Press International

LAOTIAN PREMIER Souvanna Phouma during interview. Diplomats say that he and General Vang Pao have in common a dependence on U.S. advice, consent and assistance.



Approved For Release 2005/11/23 : CIA-RDP80B01284A001800120040-1 North Vietnamese after victory of his troops, sponsored by U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, at Plaine des Jarres.

28 OCT 1965

# SOVIET ARMS GAIN DETECTED BY U.S.

## Big Missile Build-Up Before Talks on Weapon Curbs Causing Concern

By WILLIAM BEECHER

Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Oct. 27—Intelligence reports indicating a Soviet build-up of many types of strategic weapons have left many United States officials apprehensive as the planned arms talks approach.

The reports, gathered mostly by surveillance satellites, show a high rate of missile construction and development of a variety of new nuclear weapons systems.

The question troubling some senior officials here is whether this new activity will make it difficult to work out arms control agreements with the Soviet Union in talks starting next month.

Starting Nov. 17 in Helsinki, Finland, negotiators for the United States and the Soviet Union are scheduled to sit down for "preliminary talks" aimed at setting up an agenda and ground rules for subsequent negotiations on limiting strategic offensive and defensive arms.

The newly reported United States intelligence information on Soviet weapons systems includes the following developments:

¶The Soviet Union has in place, or going into place, about 1,350 intercontinental ballistic missiles, roughly 300 more land-based units than the United States and 150 more than reported by American officials last spring.

¶The Russians have tested and are believed to have started to deploy a new liquid-fueled intercontinental missile. Unlike previous types, which were tested over the Pacific, this one has been fired only over the Soviet land mass, where it is harder for American reconnaissance to monitor the tests.

¶The Soviet Union has been testing a new, swing-wing medium-range bomber, presumably for use against targets in Western Europe and Asia, even though it already has a fleet of 750 medium bombers.

aerial refueling, the new bomber could be used on round-trip strikes against the United States.

¶The Russians are testing a new medium-range ballistic missile, though they already have more than 700 such missiles aimed at targets in Western Europe and Asia.

¶The Soviet Union is installing more long-range radars suitable for use with antimissile defense and is testing advanced antimissile missiles.

### Objectives Unclear

When this new evidence is added to continued construction of Polaris-type submarines and active testing of multiple warheads, the pattern worries many officials who are trying to figure out the objectives of the Soviet build-up and its implications for arms limitation talks.

"They just keep building up all along the line," one Pentagon officer said. "You'd think they didn't have money constraints. It's not a crash program in any area, but a sustained, high-quality, impressive effort."

Depending on their point of view, some officials react to these developments by being more eager than ever to see arms talks begin, and others who have not really believed such talks would prove successful, are more skeptical than ever.

Several Administration officials, interviewed over the last three weeks, conceded their puzzlement over many of these activities. As recently as last November, for example, the intelligence community predicted that the Soviet Union would stop deploying more intercontinental missiles when they had roughly equaled the 1,054 in the American arsenal. The Russians have far exceeded this level, however, and show no sign of stopping.

The Soviet Union has increased the rate of deployment of the giant SS-9 missile while slowing somewhat the installation of smaller SS-11 missiles.

The SS-9 can carry a single warhead of from 9 to 25 megatons (9 to 25 million tons of TNT) or three warheads of 4 to 5 megatons each. The SS-11 carries a warhead of one megaton similar to the payload of the Minuteman missile.

Dr. John S. Foster Jr., the Pentagon's research and development chief, has said that 420 SS-9's carrying three separately targetable warheads with one-quarter mile accuracy could destroy about 95 per cent of the 1,000 Minutemen in their underground silos.

The Soviet Union is now be-

giant missiles in various stages of construction. At the present rate of deployment, they could have the Minuteman-killer force in three more years.

Since the much smaller SS-11, which will constitute the bulk of the Soviet force, is large enough to destroy cities, American officials can think of no other use for the SS-9 than to go after the Minuteman.

Why do the Russians feel they need so many Minuteman-busters, officials ask. Is it because they are consciously moving toward a first-strike capability, as Defense Secretary Melvin R. Laird suggested last spring?

Is it because there is a Soviet military-industrial complex that is more persuasive in pressing for a share of the Soviet budget than the apartment-building lobby?

Or are the Russians simply eager to provide as many missiles as possible on the theory that if deterrence fails, the nation with the most missiles will prevail? The more SS-9's that can be targeted on Minuteman missiles, the fewer Minuteman can hit Soviet cities.

The Russians have traditionally stressed defense in their military planning. If they are indeed trying to develop as much capability as possible to limit damage in the event of nuclear war, this could make it difficult for the United States and the Soviet Union to come to terms in arms control talks since they would be arguing from different premises.

The cornerstone of American philosophy is that nuclear war must be made so devastating that it will be unthinkable and everyone will be deterred from starting such a war.

Toward that end, the United States would like to limit antimissile defenses so that either nation could destroy the other in retaliation for a first strike. The United States would also like to limit offensive systems so that neither could have enough to stage a surprise attack and destroy the other nation's ability to retaliate.

But if the Soviet Union insists on the need for increasing its ability to limit damage in its territory, American strategic planners say, this would pose an obstacle to possible agreements.

The new Soviet intercontinental missile is also a puzzle. Its test firings from Plesetsk, in northwest Russia, seemed to be of a new space launch vehicle. But analysts decided it was in fact an intercontinental missile when shots were fired to a test range in the Kamchatka Peninsula, 3,500 miles away.

Until now the Russians have been cautious before deploying them.

And they did not try to disguise tests to look like something else, whereas, informed sources say, this time they did just that.

### Anticipating U.S. Gains

Since United States experts believe they may have to depend largely on reconnaissance satellites to police any arms control agreement, they are disquieted by presumed Soviet attempts to disguise their testing.

Some specialists on Soviet affairs believe that the Soviet military have successfully pressed for an undiminished strategic program on the ground that the United States seems to be disengaging from Vietnam and it will have more money for strategic weapons.

According to this view new American systems will have to be faced five to seven years from now so this is no time for the Soviet Union to cut back investment in its strategic nuclear war force.

Indeed, Soviet military analysts, looking at the variety of American strategic systems in development or under discussion, can make a case against complacency.

The United States is moving rapidly to complete tests of multiple independently targetable re-entry vehicles for two missile systems. Soviet monitoring activity must convince the Russians that both the three-warhead Minuteman-3 and the 10-warhead Poseidon missiles, which have been under test since August, 1968, will be formidable additions to the American arsenal. Barring a test moratorium, the two new systems will be ready for deployment next year.

The Americans insist their multiple warheads are too small to be used effectively against hardened targets, like missile silos, but are designed to overwhelm a heavy missile defense, thus assuring that Soviet cities will be destroyed if nuclear war breaks out.

### Accuracy Is a Factor

But can the Russians be sure that the accuracy of the improved missiles is not becoming so precise that even the admittedly small multiple warheads could be targeted against Soviet hard sites?

The Minuteman-3 is designed to carry three warheads of about 100 kilotons; the Poseidon submarine-based missiles, 10 warheads of 30 to 40 kilotons each. By comparison, the Soviet SS-9 is being tested with three warheads of about five megatons each, 50 times more powerful than each Minuteman-3 warhead.

Continued

Similarly, the Soviet planner looking at American dispositions of antimissile deployments may be struck by the difference between announced plans and capabilities.

The Nixon Administration has narrowly won Congressional approval to start a modest deployment of the Safeguard missile defense around two Minuteman missile complexes. The Administration talks about possibly expanding the system later to provide a thin defense, over the whole country, against the small missile force that Communist China may possess in the middle nineteen-seventies.

But the Soviet planners are aware that the Joint Chiefs of Staff for years had urged construction of a heavy missile defense to protect about 50 American cities against Soviet missiles, to limit damage in the event deterrence failed. Once the limited Safeguard system is installed, a decision could be made to expand it significantly, Soviet weapons experts are believed to say.

Except for the small force of bomber versions of the medium range, swing-wing F-111, the United States has not developed any new bomber over the last decade. But the Russians can point to Congressional testimony and newspaper reports that the new Administration is considering designing a new replacement for the aging long-range B-52, starting in the next defense budget.

So Soviet military men can, and probably are, contending that if arms talks are not successful in freezing the strategic arms race, the Soviet Union must be prepared.

It is because of the built-in momentum of action and reaction in both nations that American arms controllers are becoming anxious that the long-delayed arms limitation talks get moving in a determined effort to see whether this momentum cannot be stopped, or at least slowed.